

**Shrink Rap Radio #360, July 18, 2013, Rediscovering Humanistic Psychology  
David Van Nuys, Ph.D., aka “Dr. Dave” interviews Jessica Grogan,  
Ph.D.**

(transcribed from [www.ShrinkRapRadio.com](http://www.ShrinkRapRadio.com) by Kat Bautista)

**Introduction:** My guest today is Dr. Jessica Grogan, and we’ll be discussing her book Encountering America: Humanistic Psychology, Sixties Culture, and the Shaping of the Modern Self. Jessica Grogan, Ph.D., is the author of Encountering America: Humanistic Psychology, Sixties Culture, and the Shaping of the Modern Self. After majoring in psychology at Vassar College, she performed her graduate work at the University of Texas, and Texas State in American Studies and professional counseling. She has taught courses on American history, 60s culture, and psychology at Southwestern University, the University of Texas, and Mount Holyoke College. Dr. Grogan’s research covers a range of topics related to psychology and American culture. She has presented papers on humanistic psychology, American psychotherapy, psychedelics, Alcoholics Anonymous, the philosophy of psychological science, and the relationship of psychology to women’s liberation and civil rights for the American Studies Association, the American Historical Association, Cheiron International Association for the History of Social and Behavioral Sciences, and the American Psychology Association. Originally from Connecticut, Grogan now lives in Austin, Texas with her husband, writer Daniel Oppenheimer, and her two children, Jolie and Asa. Now, here’s the interview.

**Dr. Dave:** Dr. Jessica Grogan, welcome to Shrink Rap Radio.

**Jessica Grogan:** Thanks for having me, Dr. Dave.

**Dr. Dave:** Well, I am so pleased to have this opportunity to speak with you, because I’m so impressed by your 2013 book, Encountering America, which documents the history of humanistic psychology.

**Grogan:** Well, it sounds like something that we have in common. You have some background in this area as well?

**Dr. Dave:** Yes, I certainly do. (laughs)

**Grogan:** (laughs)

**Dr. Dave:** Humanistic psychology played a huge role in my life. It’s a movement that I was both influenced by and a part of. And as a matter of fact, it plays a strong role even in shaping this podcast interview series, because somehow this series when I started out I really intended for it to reflect my values, I guess, which were largely shaped by the humanistic psychology movement. Now I have to ask you, looking at your photo, were you even alive in the 1960s?

**Grogan:** (laughs) I was not.

**Dr. Dave:** Okay. Were you alive in the 1970s?

**Grogan:** I was born in 1976.

**Dr. Dave:** Okay, so it's really interesting that you weren't really born when all of this was happening and that's probably a good thing, because it's allowed you to take a very objective look at that period.

**Grogan:** Yeah, I think it gives me a unique perspective, and entering, I went through a lot of archival material, journals, correspondence between psychologists involved in the movement, things like that, and I came to it fresh in that way. And I have my own experience of psychology, which was mainly in the 1990s and early 2000s and was able to see how this related to this period in the 50s and 60s and 70s, with that blend of the present.

**Dr. Dave:** Well, that's fascinating. Now, given that you weren't around to experience humanistic psychology, and all the other associated phenomena of the 60s and 70s, what led to your interest in writing this book? It was a big project to take on and you really threw yourself into it very...

**Grogan:** I did, yeah.

**Dr. Dave:** Yeah.

**Grogan:** Well, I mean, my own background, I had an undergraduate degree in psychology, and then did some research at Harvard Med School in psychiatry, and then started a clinical Ph.D. program in psychology. And so I organically formed a critique of academic psychology, which I think really paralleled the critiques that humanistic psychologists had in the 50s.

**Dr. Dave:** Oh, fascinating.

**Grogan:** So, I mean, it was a lot of the things, the positivism and the scientism, and I was in a heavily research-oriented program for my clinical doctoral work, and felt like I wasn't really even allowed to talk about people, (laughs) I was sort of talking about participants...

**Dr. Dave:** Yeah. Yes.

**Grogan:** Instead of people – and I wasn't talking about theory at all. So I wasn't allowed to say the word “Freud” in this program and I really – it became increasingly oppressive to me. I had entered psychology with the hope of engaging the complexity of human experience and what I was doing to be trained as a psychologist was very far from that. I actually ended up...

**Dr. Dave:** Where was this again? Did you say it was at Harvard?

**Grogan:** This was at the University of South Florida.

**Dr. Dave:** Oh, okay.

**Grogan:** I had been at Harvard doing psychiatry research before that. So then I ended up leaving the field, actually, and doing a master's in writing and doing some different things, moving away from psychology, thinking I was done with psychology. And then I started an American Studies program and started studying American culture and I came back to this fundamental interest I had and passion for psychology, and through that lens I was really able to get a fuller picture of what had happened, what I had seen in that program and what I had experienced and really began to see the parallels with what had happened to humanistic psychology. So I took on that project also in part because my advisor at the time, he's actually still working on a biography of Rollo May and said there is nothing of this kind about humanistic psychology. There's no really good cultural and intellectual history and it's really an absence in the field.

**Dr. Dave:** Yes, I would say so. And what's fascinating to me is that had you been born earlier you would have sought out Sonoma State University or West Georgia College.

**Grogan:** I would have, absolutely.

**Dr. Dave:** Yeah. Because there was a hunger for what you're putting your finger on and we were flooded with students who were experiencing the same kind of frustration that you were with, as you say, scientism, and who really wanted something that spoke to their heart, their soul, their personal experiences, and so on, and there was a period there where it was just booming. And one of the things that has just made me and my colleagues is that humanistic psychology, as you point out in the book, tends to get no more than a paragraph or two in today's introduction to psychology textbooks, so I'm so glad that you wanted to set the record straight.

**Grogan:** Yes.

**Dr. Dave:** Now it occurs to me that before we get too deeply into the topic I should ask you to give our listeners some definition and/or overview of just what we mean by the term humanistic psychology. I have my own take on that but I think it'd be good to put yours out there.

**Grogan:** Well, it's an interesting question, one because I think it was a difficult question for the founders of humanistic psychology to agree on in their answers...

**Dr. Dave:** Sure.

**Grogan:** ...but certainly I think there are some basics about it that everyone has in common. One was an orientation towards human nature which was essentially positive. The idea that individuals were motivated to grow and unless something was obstructing that in some way, environmentally, parents or something like that, then we would grow and we would become the best we could be or reach our potential. So it was that kind of fundamental positive orientation, which was really revolutionary in the 1950s when it was focused on pathology and diagnosis and quantifying these problems. So one is that positive orientation. Another is in approach to the person. So when you think about this as applied to the clinical realm, it's a non-directive approach, it's a non-hierarchical approach, which says people not only have the right to self-determination, freedom should be at the heart of human existence and that we need to not only encourage that freedom and help to bring it out, but that that's a fundamental part of any psychological practice, is that feature, and that equality between people who are interacting whether or not one has a professional degree or not. Those are some of the basics, and I think in terms of what humanistic psychologists filled out that picture with, that varied pretty widely.

**Dr. Dave:** Yeah. As a matter of fact I taught in a psychology department that was very identified with the humanistic psychology movement, and yet there was a constant debate about what that meant and whether we were all onboard with it or not.  
(laughs)

**Grogan:** Right, I mean, even with the first – saying that people are inherently good or motivated towards growth, there was even debate within the founding movement between Rollo May and Carl Rogers, where Rollo May said, “Well, evil is part of us too,” and Carl Rogers said, “No, it's not.”

**Dr. Dave:** Yeah...

**Grogan:** And they said, “Well, where does it come from?” So...

**Dr. Dave:** Yeah. Well, for one thing, none of us were graduates of a program in humanistic psychology.

**Grogan:** Right.

**Dr. Dave:** We had all been trained in various orientations that had already existed and a lot of what humanistic psychology seemed to be about was rebellion. And in particular, rebelling against the pathological and authoritarian orientation of psychoanalysis on the one hand and the mechanistic, deterministic approach of behaviorism on the other and those two were the two forces that had ruled the day for quite a while, and so there was a rebellion with that which was also very much enmeshed with the whole rebellious period of the 60s. So it seemed like...

**Grogan:** Right.

**Dr. Dave:** ...there was a lot of rebelling going on.

**Grogan:** Yeah, and I mean I think that's why humanistic psychology had its moment when it did. It was in the 1950s, it was a parallel critique with a kind of sociological-cultural critique that was happening. People in other realms, academics and cultural critics were starting to feel the same thing, the same pressure for adjustment, conformity, quantification, the increases in technology and machination and so I think that the fact that it formed at that time and then it really got a lot of energy from other liberation movements in the 60s.

**Dr. Dave:** Yes. My psychology colleagues and I some years back, a few years ago, wrestled with the question of whether or not humanistic psychology is dead. And for myself I came to the conclusion that it's not dead so much as having been absorbed into the culture to such an extent that it's taken for granted and therefore not recognizable. So I was thrilled to see that you reached a similar conclusion. Tell us...

**Grogan:** My exact thesis!

**Dr. Dave:** Yeah, yeah, tell us...

**Grogan:** Yeah.

**Dr. Dave:** ...about your take on that.

**Grogan:** I think that I actually went into this project a little more cynically, feeling like it was dead because it wasn't present in the clinical psychology program I was in. I didn't see these palpable traces of it in the culture until I started looking for them. So I think that's part of why a lot of people miss it. But my general feeling is that I think in a way it's the ultimate success as a movement because no movement stays dominant forever, but humanistic psychology has had all these other lives in different areas, like business management. Myself actually, my third graduate degree will be in counseling and counseling as a field is basically humanistic psychology now. I mean, these are the underlying principles...

**Dr. Dave:** Mm-hmm.

**Grogan:** ...these are now called basic skills, what was once called a humanistic orientation is now the basic skills...

**Dr. Dave:** Yes.

**Grogan:** ...of counselors, in pastoral counseling, in any kind of self-help literature, and also just in the way that we talk about our marriages, our relationships, what we

want for ourselves. It's just so pervasive that now I just see it everywhere, I think. It's just the air we breathe.

**Dr. Dave:** Yeah. I totally agree. And along with counseling, one of my sons just got a master's in science and nursing, and I've been so impressed by nursing as represented at the University of California, San Francisco. It feels like humanistic psychology, that sort of an attitude about people just permeates their program. If I were starting out I'd really consider being a nurse at this point.

**Grogan:** Yeah, and I think humanistic medicine is – I mean, it's something that was being touched on during the time period when humanistic psychology was really at its peak but I'm hearing it again, this interest in humanistic medicine, and you see – I mean, even in psychopharmacology all these studies on the placebo effect, which is essentially humanistic – relationships that people have that create healing...

**Dr. Dave:** Yeah.

**Grogan:** ...that feeling of being tended to as a person. And I think that – I mean, we go through ways of getting that message and forgetting that message and at least myself, I'm optimistic at this current cultural moment that I'm hearing more about again.

**Dr. Dave:** Yeah. Now one of the things that you touched upon was that humanist was a bad word in many circles, and the people who began the humanistic psychology movement weren't necessarily identified and maybe didn't even know about – I didn't know about – there was something called humanism that was atheistic...

**Grogan:** Right.

**Dr. Dave:** ...strongly atheistic...

**Grogan:** Mm-hmm.

**Dr. Dave:** ...and therefore offensive to lots of people in the conservative and religious end of the spectrum.

**Grogan:** Yeah, I think it's actually an unfortunate legacy of the movement. It was something that they wrestled with at the beginning in the early – the essential founding meeting at Saybrook about the meaning of the name and had kind of cursorially been given the name – I think Maslow's son-in-law thought of it and Tony Sutich and Abe Maslow ended up naming the journal the Journal of Humanistic Psychology before the movement began officially a year later. And Alpert himself wrote – it was a really problematic bad name early on, it had all these other connotations that didn't really represent it and they had wrestled – I think the original name that they wanted was the Journal of Orthopsychology which was an alternative health-oriented psychology but there was an Association of

Orthopsychiatry and they didn't like that. They didn't want them stepping into their realm. So I feel like, yeah, it had this other political and non-religious meaning and then they tried to give it a new meaning, and I think people still don't quite understand always what it means when you say a lot of people call humanistic psychologists humanists. Even in my counseling program, the professors often refer to humanistic psychologists as humanists which is really inaccurate, but the name – you want to take a shortcut. It's a mouthful. I can't even remember how many times I had to write that out in my book, like, "This is awkward. I want an easier thing to call them."

**Dr. Dave:** Yeah. Yeah. When I got involved with the movement I really didn't know anything about the intellectual, philosophical basis of it. All I knew was it had the right ring to it.

**Grogan:** Mm-hmm. Right.

**Dr. Dave:** Oh, it's about humans. And humanistic to me had connotations of caring, I guess a kind of caring-ness. And also I was very much into seeing the subjective experience being more valued than it seemed to be in the program that I went through. You point out that humanistic psychology has had a huge impact, you already mentioned counseling and on psychotherapy. What in particular are some of the characteristics that you see in therapy that are "humanistic"?

**Grogan:** Well, I think the basic structure of therapy. You go into an office, you sit face to face – I don't think outside of psychoanalysis people aren't lying down on the couch. I think it's a pretty personal relationship. There's then a movement lately towards some self-disclosure on the part of the therapist. Research is showing that that's efficacious and that the founding principles, the authenticity of the therapist and exchanging empathy, and so that idea that it's a truly human interaction and I think that's what we've come to expect as part of the psychotherapy we receive. Even if we go to a psychotherapist who's cognitive behavioral or something, some other orientation that in theory contradicts humanistic principles, I think you're still finding these basic elements of the relationship.

**Dr. Dave:** Yeah, that's true. I've been struck by that, because...

**Grogan:** Yeah.

**Dr. Dave:** ...at first I was put off by the sound of cognitive behavioral therapy. Oh, that sounds too much like the old radical Skinnerian behaviorism which was pretty offensive, but you're right, people have – my experience is that psychology has softened, and I mean that in a good way.

**Grogan:** Great.

**Dr. Dave:** Psychology has softened somewhat in terms of the hard and fast boundaries and schools of thought that used to be very divisive. And for years I didn't go to American Psychological Association meetings, because I was convinced that it wouldn't be a home for me, that I wouldn't find anybody there that I wanted to engage with, and so I was really pleasantly surprised, even shocked, when I finally did go to one maybe about ten years ago and there were lots of people that I could talk to and I was able to engage with. And even people who were working in very different aspects of the field seemed very open and they were open to dialogue and questioning and so on, so I feel good about some of the ways that psychology has evolved and I do think there has been an impact. Now, you also point out that it's had a lasting impact on management theory and practice.

**Grogan:** Mm-hmm.

**Dr. Dave:** Tell us just a little bit about that.

**Grogan:** I think, in general, when Maslow got involved with management in the late 50s and early 60s, one of the things that was happening – part of innovation was if we treat a worker essentially as a human with the drive to reach their potential and commitment towards growth and improvement, then we're going to have a lot more success. I mean, sometimes that meant more productivity, more efficiency and things like that just from a pure business perspective, but from the experience of the worker, the best thing to do was to give them a sense of autonomy in establishing their direction. So it won't necessarily mean full autonomy but they might have input and they might be able to interact with their boss about their concerns and their interests and their goals and that all of these kinds of things would become part of the work experience, and I feel like in most cases, that really has become the situation. People expect to discuss problems with their bosses or if they have any hopes of progressing in a company, then they seem to be happier in their jobs. And I think even with the younger generation now, the frequency with which they change jobs and are looking for jobs that maximize their interest and their happiness and things like that that it's become more associated with identity and less of a separate thing like a necessary evil to facilitate the part of our lives where we're living more fully. We look towards the work as a way to also reach these goals. I mean, obviously there's a class issue in what I'm talking about, and I'm talking about really middle and upper class that we have the privilege of seeing work in this way. But I think in terms of management theory and looking at these kinds of white-collar jobs, the work environment has really shifted in that way.

**Dr. Dave:** Yes. Now I'm not sure if you went into the impact on education in the book, but I think that's been profound. You do talk about the influence of the national training labs in Bethel, Maine...

**Grogan:** Mm-hmm.



**Dr. Dave:** ...and their work in sensitivity training, which eventually morphed into the encounter group movement. And I want to get into all of that in a bit because that's stuff that I'm really interested in and fits in well with my background, but a big piece of their contribution in my mind was that what they refer to as laboratory learning, which basically means experiential learning. And the experiential approach to learning certainly had a very large influence on my whole approach to teaching as I became a professor at Sonoma State University. And it seems to be that humanistic psychology validated subjective experience in a way that had been left out and perhaps more than anything else that's what drew me to it. And I went on to make certain that in all the courses that I taught over the next 35 years at Sonoma State that there was pretty much an even balance between cognitive content, which I thought was really important, and experiential work in each class. So I think this notion of experiential teaching has pervaded much of secondary and university teaching. Even in other disciplines, I find.

**Grogan:** I think even elementary teaching...

**Dr. Dave:** That's true.

**Grogan:** And it's something I do mention in the book, mostly just in reference to Carl Roger's work because he's the one of the founders who really took on the project of education in published books specifically on the subject of humanistic education. But it was – yeah, I mean, just the whole idea that you're not just sitting there, this vessel for information, that you need to be actively involved and that even little kids, everyone from little kids to college students really need a stake in their education and need not just their minds engaged but their whole being engaged in a way.

**Dr. Dave:** Yeah. Yeah, definitely, and you give a lot of ink as it were to Carl Rogers, to Maslow and to Rollo May as maybe the 3 most important theorists. And one thing about Carl Rogers that a lot of people don't know and I'm not sure if it was touched in in your book, I don't remember encountering it, was I believe that Rogers was the first person to introduce audiotaping and eventually videotaping of therapy sessions as a way of both researching the process and also for training purposes. And before that, the feeling was particularly from the psychoanalytic side of things was that, "Oh, you can't do that, that's much too private, that's a sacred space..."

**Grogan:** Mm-hmm.

**Dr. Dave:** "...and you'd be damaging that space." But I think today it's routine to expect that in the process of training or research that some kind of recording will go on. Were you aware of that?

**Grogan:** Yeah, and even beyond that, he published the first actual transcripts of sessions...

**Dr. Dave:** Yes.

**Grogan:** So I think of him as really revolutionary at demystifying psychotherapy for the, at least, American public and helping to chip away at this idea that psychotherapy was only for pathological people, right? That there are people struggling with ordinary life problems...

**Dr. Dave:** Mm-hmm.

**Grogan:** ...where psychotherapy could be really beneficial and so publishing those and having the videotapes and the making it more accessible and more human-feeling, I think, that helps to give people the sense that there's not some kind of voodoo going on, right? That it's actually just a genuine human interaction that's happening.

**Dr. Dave:** Yeah, I think a lot of people don't realize how big a contribution he made in his personal demeanor. He came across as a kind of mild-mannered man rather than a firebrand but really, to me, he's like a snapping turtle. (laughs)

**Grogan:** Right.

**Dr. Dave:** He was extremely tenacious.

**Grogan:** I mean, I remember the first time I read his transcripts and he has all the ums and the uhs and manners of speech just like anyone else...

**Dr. Dave:** Yeah.

**Grogan:** Not everything he says is brilliant, and at first I read it, I'm like, "Well that isn't that impressive." And then going over it a couple of times, you start to see that there is this kind of genius beneath it. I mean, even in his concept of reflecting the content of what another person's saying, he's not just parroting it like some people would choose to believe...

**Dr. Dave:** Yes.

**Grogan:** ...what he's really doing is calibrating and recalibrating his understanding, so sometimes he would reflect back and get it right, and sometimes he'd reflect back and get it wrong and get corrected by the person he was speaking to, and then really getting a very fine-tuned understanding of that person and it ended up feeling rather brilliant to me by the end.

**Dr. Dave:** Yeah. Yeah, definitely. I've taught courses in introduction to counseling and it's a hard point to get across, because...

**Grogan:** Yeah.

**Dr. Dave:** ...it was subtle, it's not as rote or routine a process as it's been characterized and...

**Grogan:** And as much as we can say it's just a normal human interaction, he wasn't quite an average human, either.

**Dr. Dave:** Yeah.

**Grogan:** So, yeah, it's a little hard to replicate and some of it is just what a person brings, or you can't really be more than yourself.

**Dr. Dave:** Exactly. Now maybe this is a good point to talk about T-groups or sensitivity training and encounter groups because you devote quite a bit of space to that so...

**Grogan:** Mm-hmm.

**Dr. Dave:** So just tell us about that.

**Grogan:** Well, T-groups, that you had mentioned, started at the National Training Laboratories in Bethel, Maine. And so this was actually mostly going on during the 50s, and then moving into the 60s, the training groups which had originally been designed for business and corporations where management would go and learn to work more effectively together and look at their interactional processes and try to improve them and maximize them. So then moving into the 60s, this started being applied to people in general and this notion that one of the ways we could grow through our interactions with other people and through being really honest and direct about our perceptions of people and our feelings and our experience. And so what really happened as humanistic psychology exploded on the scene in the early 60s was that these encounter groups which were much more personally focused than NTL sensitivity training groups, they really took hold. So at growth centers like Esalen in Big Sur California and across the country, but most concentrated in California, which really became the nucleus of the human potential movement which incorporated these groups, people would go for weekend retreats or even longer and really be in a group of people and have this in-the-moment experience of connecting with them, sharing their perception, sharing their frustrations or anger or whatever they were experiencing at the moment and really found it to be life-changing, I think, in a lot of cases.

**Dr. Dave:** Yeah, I think it was for me. I was in some T-groups and later encounter groups while a graduate student at the University of Michigan and I went on to become an encounter group leader in a graduate student-led outreach program that we developed there. In Michigan, being located midway between the two coasts, was getting pollinated by students and junior faculty who'd been to NTL in Bethel, Maine or to Esalen in California and I have to say that I felt very alienated as a graduate student until my first experience in an encounter group. And the thing that made a difference for me was getting feedback from peers about how they saw me

and they had such complimentary things to say, I guess, that I felt finally seen as a potential therapist, as somebody who wanted to work with people, and I felt like whatever good qualities were innate to me were seen and valued which was not a message that I had gotten from any faculty, so ...

**Grogan:** Right.

**Dr. Dave:** ...that had (inaudible)

**Grogan:** And I think the potential of these groups in both directions was really strong so in the positive, which fortunately was your experience, but also in the negative, really calling people out on their problems...

**Dr. Dave:** Yes.

**Grogan:** ...and the really negative features of their interpersonal approach or even their personality. And so a lot of what was happening in these groups was really drawing these things out in people, their really negative – so for example in the racial encounter groups which mostly happened in the late 60s, they were calling each other names and really hostile hateful things, really trying to get to the bottom of a lot of conflict and a lot of anger and hurt and the goal of some of that, the more negative stuff was really some kind of healing that this idea that there was a catharsis to it, that...

**Dr. Dave:** Sure.

**Grogan:** ...externalizing a lot of these feelings was so much healthier than us walking by each other in the street keeping them inside, and things like that.

**Dr. Dave:** Yeah, I think there was the idea of trying to get people to drop their masks...

**Grogan:** Mm-hmm.

**Dr. Dave:** ...to be more genuine and you rightly point out, I think, that there were positive effects. For many people that were also probably casualties and hurt feelings and so on. And for myself as a leader and I didn't get addicted to it either. (laughs)

**Grogan:** (laughs)

**Dr. Dave:** As a leader, I didn't let it get to that point, nor did I experience some of the really excessive things that you describe in the book. Although looking back from today's perspective, I'm not sure how I'd feel if there were a video camera in the room...

**Grogan:** Right.

**Dr. Dave:** ...with everything that went on. Talk a bit about the Esalen Institute in Big Sur California, because you devote a whole chapter to it, and I think rightly so, because it was so influential in both good ways and in ways that it didn't achieve all of its initial vision and objectives. Asking you to talk about these things, I realize, is a really tall order because you went to considerable care in your book to be very balanced and to go into all of these topics in real detail. But tell us a bit about Esalen. I was speaking to one of my listeners recently who is doing a transcript for me and made reference to Esalen and didn't know what Esalen was and I was shocked.

**Grogan:** Yeah. (laughs)

**Dr. Dave:** The whole world hasn't heard of Esalen?

**Grogan:** I know, I know. Well I think Esalen for me also became symbolic of the shift in humanistic psychology in the 60s from these intellectual academic bases to the experiential, almost excesses that were happening regularly in the culture. And so Esalen was founded the same year as humanistic psychology in 1962 and a lot of what happened early on there was almost academic in nature and it was – kind of conferences. There were even conferences in the early year or two on psychedelics but not about people using them firsthand, but about the potential of them and intellectual engagement with the possibilities of psychedelics. So a lot of this original feeling of it and I think mostly the intentions of Michael Murphy, who was one of the founders, was that it would really be a place, a growth center where people could explore their thinking on spirituality and human growth and psychotherapy and all these things and then very, very quickly became something entirely different where it was almost wholly experiential and in excess. So you say you didn't get addicted to encounter groups – well, plenty of people there did...

**Dr. Dave:** Yeah.

**Grogan:** ...also got addicted to psychedelics and at the peak of the 60s there were people just camped out on the ground. They were, like, tripping or stoned all the time. There was just a lot going on there that violated the ideas, the founding ideas of humanistic psychology so the real – the heavier ideas, the weight of it. And so it went in this direction where people just drank a lot of the kool-aid.

**Dr. Dave:** (laughs)

**Grogan:** They became obsessed with their own program, and it became more about themselves, a narcissistic self-interest and “Well, if I want to reach my potential and to do that I'm going to do it at the expense of community, I'm going to do that at the expense of my marriage. I need to do what feels good or I need to do what makes me happy.” And really out of context of the rest of life. So...

**Dr. Dave:** By the way, it was parodied in a film and I'm wondering if you ever saw it, Bob and Carol and Ted and Alice...

**Grogan:** Bob and Carol – yes.

**Dr. Dave:** You have seen it.

**Grogan:** Yeah, yeah, I think I mentioned it in the book as well. Certainly, right. And the parody I think was probably not far off for some participants of Esalen. It's just adopting the language of humanistic psychology or some of the guiding ideas without really getting the message.

**Dr. Dave:** Yes and you know we haven't mentioned the geography of Esalen, which really is quite important, I think. It's an absolutely magical spot on the wild northern California coastal area known as Big Sur with towering cliffs and ocean crashing on the rocks in the cliffs below and beautiful trees and forest all around and long rolling green lawns...

**Grogan:** Mm-hmm.

**Dr. Dave:** ...on the Esalen property and gardens, organic gardens and meals that are prepared from the organic gardens, wonderful vegetarian cooking. I was co-leading a workshop there a couple of years ago, so that's why all these images are pretty clear to me, and it's still going. It's still going.

**Grogan:** Yes.

**Dr. Dave:** It's not going gangbusters the way it was in its heyday but there are still lots of workshops going on there and...

**Grogan:** Yeah, there's good stuff happening there...

**Dr. Dave:** Yeah.

**Grogan:** But as you said, it doesn't quite have the power it had at the time. I also considered hosting a workshop there, last summer it was the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, and I wanted to do something historical, a weekend long retreat, and it's difficult to do a workshop there now. You need to get a minimum enrollment. You won't know until two weeks before, maybe you'll be able to afford your plane ticket. Things like that. It's not what it was...

**Dr. Dave:** Yes. Right.

**Grogan:** ...in the sixties. But also you mentioned the location and I think it's interesting in a couple of ways, the location of Esalen and a lot of these growth centers in

California in particular. It was really idyllic and it was really a privilege to be there. So...

**Dr. Dave:** Yes.

**Grogan:** ...this was an opportunity that was really available to middle-upper and upper-classes for the most part. And...

**Dr. Dave:** That's true, I didn't go to a lot of stuff there because I couldn't afford it as a student.

**Grogan:** Yeah. Right. It was difficult and you had to have – the luxury of having time off and having the funds to go there and be in this kind of remote idyllic location. And they actually opened a San Francisco office of it and did not have anywhere near the success that they had in Big Sur partially because the urban environment didn't promote these feelings of transcendence just right off the bat. So...

**Dr. Dave:** Yes. Now you mentioned psychedelics earlier and you got a chapter on that and their influence on humanistic psychology and what was later called the human potential movement. So tell us a bit about the good and the bad or whatever on psychedelics on the humanistic movement.

**Grogan:** Well I think there was an interesting – early on there was an interesting relationship between humanistic psychology and psychedelics. I think humanistic psychologists initially thought there was a lot of potential for psychedelics to help us understand, to experience transcendence our own – the peaks of human existence. And Maslow was engaged with Timothy Leary and Richard Alpert when they were doing their early, more scientific work at Harvard. And various people within the humanistic psychology movement were engaged at that phase as well and felt like it was pretty exciting to be able to have a laboratory where you can explore these experiences, where you feel out of your body, you feel at one with existence and things like that. And there was a spiritual component to it. I mean, the story of psychedelic research in the 50s and 60s is that it became a big party, essentially, and Timothy Leary of course ended up being dismissed from his position, and it became criminalized. The use of LSD and also just really – demonized by the media, so it became no longer reputable but also the people who were involved with it ruined the party in a sense, right? They stopped doing things that were scientific and looking at it in safe ways. They initially always had a guide when people were experimenting and they were reporting observations and things like that and later on it was just free use. And the more they used it the less interested they were in the larger implications or the value and then conveying the value to others. So Maslow himself is just a good example, became really disillusioned both with psychedelic use and experimentation and with Esalen – just had a lot of critiques of – and conflated the two and had critiques about what was happening there in terms of this really just self-interested and self-indulgent

behavior. This hedonism characterized a lot of that. What was happening in the psychedelic movement and...

**Dr. Dave:** And this next question probably is an extension of what you're saying to ask you to take us through the transition from humanistic psychology to the human potential movement. And I guess in part it may be that's about more of a movement towards commercialization, would you say?

**Grogan:** Yeah, in a way, I mean, it's interesting – it was a question I really wrestled with in writing the book because there are times when they're indistinguishable. The human potential movement was named just about as quickly as humanistic psychology. They obviously speak to each other and humanistic psychologists were at least at many points excited by what was happening in the human potential movement, excited by the fact that their more academic, intellectual movement was being culturally adopted and that it was having such a big impact on the culture.

**Dr. Dave:** Mm-hmm.

**Grogan:** So there was initially a lot of excitement about this cultural spillover which the human potential movement essentially was, and then also just a lot of deep concern about potential distortions of the most important principles of humanistic psychology. It would happen once you put something like that into the hands of corporate entities or just culture, teenagers, or whoever, they just lost control very quickly, so it became just out of their hands the direction that that was going to go in.

**Dr. Dave:** Well, I'm thinking, too, of things like Werner Erhard and est...

**Grogan:** Right.

**Dr. Dave:** ...Erhard Seminars Training, which became huge and there were spinoffs of that, there was one called Lifespring, which I actually attended one of theirs and these large, from one point of view mind-control, seminars (laughs) where they...

**Grogan:** Mm-hmm.

**Dr. Dave:** ...lock people up in a hotel room, hundreds...

**Grogan:** And they couldn't go to the bathroom?

**Dr. Dave:** You were not allowed to go to the bathroom, except in specified bathroom breaks and you were really put on the spot and I had and still have a very ambivalent attitude towards those, maybe more negative than positive, but I have to say I did have somewhat of a positive experience from one three-day experience that I went to, but I was asked to write a report. That's how I got in. I wasn't willing to pay, but I was hired to write a report...



**Grogan:** Uh-huh.

**Dr. Dave:** ...about the experience for them, an internal report.

**Grogan:** Okay.

**Dr. Dave:** I'm sure they weren't happy with my report because...

**Grogan:** No. (laughs)

**Dr. Dave:** ...I likened it to Chinese brainwashing during the Korean conflict.

**Grogan:** I'm sure they were glad to get that!

**Dr. Dave:** Yeah. Right. But...

**Grogan:** Well, yeah, and I mean, there's one point this tension was there from the beginning. So Werner Erhard attended a Humanistic Psychology Association meeting, which at their peak, these meetings were pretty exciting meetings, not at all like the academic conferences of today. There was a big experiential component and a lot of variety of things were happening at these meetings. But Erhard was there and the founders were interviewed for this piece on what they thought of his presence, and it was pretty negative. I mean it was mostly that they felt like, "Well, he was invited, he just came." It wasn't that "This isn't representing our interests or our belief, this is just part of the ethic of nondirectiveness," right? We're not going to be...

**Dr. Dave:** Yeah.

**Grogan:** ...a hierarchical association, and we're not going to be directed, we're going to let this happen organically, and so one of the things that that philosophy yielded was some people who were directly violating humanistic principles being attached to their organization.

**Dr. Dave:** Yeah, that was one thing that we struggled with often in the psychology department at Sonoma State. We weren't good at setting boundaries, reasonable boundaries, and it was possible for people with fairly psychopathic personalities to take advantage of that. When you're very identified with being a good person (laughs) ...

**Grogan:** Right.

**Dr. Dave:** ...the good guy and treating everyone with wonderful openness and fairness and so on, it really puts you to the test. There are people who really put you to the test. And I can imagine how they must have struggled with that issue with Werner

Erhard who I thought came across like a used car salesman. And as a matter of fact, I actually had...

**Grogan:** You weren't the only one.

**Dr. Dave:** Yeah, I know. And before he got big and famous he was actually a guest in a class that I taught and my impression of him was that he was like a used car salesman.

**Grogan:** Well he actually had no psychological background. He had been a businessman before.

**Dr. Dave:** Yeah.

**Grogan:** And in fact a salesman. (laughs) So yeah.

**Dr. Dave:** Yeah. But then he repackaged a lot from philosophy, psychology, the spiritual disciplines, he repackaged it, commercialized it, in a very powerful and successful way.

**Grogan:** I think it's interesting, though, and I actually thought about writing just a freelance article on the fact that currently the Landmark Forum is what became of Werner Erhard's est and that it's still very popular and has a lot of the same principles. I'm not sure if it's completely harsh in the way that it was in the 60s but I think in a lot of ways it is, and some of the idea is that we're going to almost shame ourselves or abuse ourselves in order to reach our potential. We have to beat up on ourselves for a while and be a little bit harder on ourselves and it's such a contradiction to what was happening in encounter groups, humanistic encounter groups, and that's won out. And so sometimes I wonder why are there so few encounter groups happening in the US or even something resembling them and why is the Landmark Forum something that's still exciting to people, and compelling to people, and what does that mean about our cultural values.

**Dr. Dave:** Yes. Now some 40 years later, we have a tremendous energy and excitement, very reminiscent of the 60s – tremendous energy and excitement around something called positive psychology.

**Grogan:** Mm-hmm.

**Dr. Dave:** Now, to some of us it seems like old wine in new bottles. What's your take on positive psychology and its relationship to humanistic psychology?

**Grogan:** Well I think for sure when Seligman came out with his manifesto for positive psychology, humanistic psychologists quickly realized that it was humanistic psychology repackaged and were a little bitter about it.

**Dr. Dave:** Yeah (inaudible)

**Grogan:** He actually responded to that and said, “Yes, obviously this is related, it has its roots in that,” but I think he said something like “But without all the crystals.” It sounds some way of saying it’s not some New Agey thing, which humanistic psychology was or he perceived it to be, really wanted to create some distance between the excesses of humanistic psychology and in fact one we really haven’t spoken about is that it really lacked a research basis, a scientific basis. So even though the founders of humanistic psychology hoped to do mixed method research where they were using quantitative phenomenological subjective research and balancing that with experimental, not much of either really ended up happening, not really to a substantial degree like it happened in other schools of psychology. So one of the reasons it really has been dismissed from academics is that it doesn’t feel evidence-based, it doesn’t really have that scientific weight and positive psychologists didn’t want that legacy attached to what they were doing, so they wanted to be the more scientific version of that and if they associated their name or they fear that that would bog them down, so I think they resurrected a lot of that strengths-based focus on positive virtue and things like that without really the whole history that came with the association with humanistic psychology.

**Dr. Dave:** Right, and I understand that, I can see where they’re coming from. But 2 years ago, though, I went to their Second World Congress in Philadelphia and in many ways I could have been at an Association for Humanistic Psychology conference 40 years ago. Some of the presentations there, they weren’t all strongly research-based...

**Grogan:** Mm-hmm.

**Dr. Dave:** ...and there were lots of people – for example, lots of people have gone into coaching, and in some ways coaching seems like an end run around the extensive training required to be, let’s say, in clinical psychology or counseling psychology. So people with either some training or no training and even people with Ph.D.’s who do have that training are moving into what’s called coaching, I think, for similar reasons like in the humanistic psychology movement to communicate something that’s more accepting, less pathologizing than psychotherapy would sound.

**Grogan:** Right.

**Dr. Dave:** So we’re going to do coaching. Well there were tons of coaches there. There were lots of presentations about coaching and also you see that same kind of commercialization happening because there are now coaching academies where you can pay to become trained as a coach and then you coach people on the phone so there’s the whole potentially a very nice little profession here, where nobody’s...

**Grogan:** Yeah.

**Dr. Dave:** ...looking over your shoulder and you can earn good money on the internet and so on, and I'm sure in many cases provide value to people. So that's just an interesting phenomenon that I'm keeping my eye on. It's also interesting to me to see that the extent to which Seligman has commercialized his work in a fairly costly program and the coaching program – actually he got the coaching ball rolling I guess with initially setting up a positive psychology coaching program, right?

**Grogan:** Mm-hmm.

**Dr. Dave:** Yeah, so...

**Grogan:** And with these steps of positive psychology though, it's also a move away from the more academic reputability that he initially had. I think so moving into a professional, more commercial realm, he's also moved out of a hugely influential position in academics which I think positive psychology initially had and was hoping to maintain.

**Dr. Dave:** Yes, somewhere I saw a little bit of an interview with him and essentially what he was saying, what he seemed to be saying, was that the ball has gotten away from him in some ways, that it became much more popularized and more widely accepted and reinterpreted than he expected. (laughs)

**Grogan:** Right, right.

**Dr. Dave:** It's gotten away from him.

**Grogan:** But it also shows the similarity, I think, of the cultural moment between the 1950s and the 1960s because that's essentially what happened to humanistic psychologists. And I think this is a cycle that we're bound to repeat over and over where we move in the direction too far towards adjustment or conformity or a reductionist view of people and then have to step back and reclaim this complexity and strength-based and looking at people in a more holistic way. And I see this tension and one of the things I write about early on in the book is that this is the legacy of American psychology from 1880 on. William James had a lot of the same concerns that humanistic psychologists had about scientism, positivism and moving too far into reducing people to their problems or behaviors or things like that.

**Dr. Dave:** Yeah, fascinating. One of the other things that struck me at the conference that I went to, the Second World Congress I guess it's called, was that some of the major presenters who were presenting on love or on strengths or related topics had been doing their research program for 30 or more years. And so they were really doing a research program already that was very closely – I don't know that they ever identified with humanistic psychology but...

**Grogan:** Mm-hmm.

**Dr. Dave:** ...certainly it was very much in line with humanistic psychology, areas of concern and focus and interest – things like creativity and authenticity and love and relationships and health, and these people have been working in that vineyard for decades. Now what Seligman did was to create a tent that everybody...

**Grogan:** Right.

**Dr. Dave:** ...can come in and get under.

**Grogan:** Mm-hmm.

**Dr. Dave:** And lots of camels are getting their noses under that tent.

**Grogan:** Well, I think the fact that they're not mentioning humanistic psychology at every turn is more evidence that we're post-humanistic, that it has been absorbed that it's so common and pervasive now that it's not even necessary.

**Dr. Dave:** Mm-hmm. Yeah. Well, let's go back to the subtitle of your book, which is Humanistic Psychology, Sixties Culture, and the Shaping of the Modern Self. So I know it's tough to sum up because that's what the whole book is devoted to, but maybe you can give us a thumbnail sketch of how the modern self as you put it has been shaped by humanistic psychology and what you call sixties culture, and we'll wrap it up with that.

**Grogan:** Okay. Well, I mean, I think about the kind of modern self historically, in terms of how we've come to what we identify with, how we think about ourselves and our lives and how that's changed from a more religious identification which – it wasn't so long ago that Americans had this religious identification but also an identification with character and hard work and more puritanical values towards this identification with the modern self that is unhindered, more free, more self-determining and happier or engaged with potential. So a lot of what I think about in terms of how humanistic psychology was key in the shaping of the modern self was that it contributed to a reformulation of the self that involved this kind of liberation from just adjusting, if you think of a lot of the kind of 1950s themes of adjustment, conforming to the herd, going along and getting along, towards finding out where your talent is, where your uniqueness is, what you value, how are you going to help to maximize those things in yourself and in your life. And so it in terms of the 60s, that's when the liberation occurred, I think, and on so many levels, so within psychology, within psychotherapy, but also within the cultural conversation. So, to me, I see there are real "this is the crux" of the shift and then beyond that, the way that we think about ourselves and the experience of the modern self is that we need to be engaged with our potential, our relationships have to foster that potential, we expect our marriages to be growth- and health-promoting. We expect the choices that we're making in our lives to be healthy and growth-promoting and we speak about ourselves in terms of the language of finding ourselves or taking time for

ourselves. It becomes almost a therapeutic project to exist, to develop throughout life. So one thing is really associated with I think the modern self is a therapy culture where the self becomes more of a project and which I think has a potential negative interpretation that we're laboring over the self but also a project in the sense of letting – finding out who that is and letting that exist organically. So in some of the experiential ways we've talked about just finding a way to be in the present and to be fully yourself as possible and integrated and connected to what that means to you.

**Dr. Dave:** You mentioned the possible critique of that and it reminded me that I think part of what led to the death of a visible humanistic psychology...

**Grogan:** Mm-hmm.

**Dr. Dave:** ...was the accusation relating to the me generation...

**Grogan:** Right.

**Dr. Dave:** I think there was an issue of Time Magazine or some – this was a phrase that...

**Grogan:** Tom Wolfe. Yes.

**Dr. Dave:** Yeah, it was all over the place, but Tom Wolfe, yes, the me generation.

**Grogan:** Mm-hmm.

**Dr. Dave:** So...

**Grogan:** Yeah, the culture of narcissism, and I think it's a fair charge.

**Dr. Dave:** (inaudible)

**Grogan:** I think it's really a valid criticism to think that we just became really self-focused and so I think one of the things that positive psychology or these post-humanistic manifestations of this have one of the values that they have is that in some cases, I think in the best cases, they're more contextualized. There might be a communitarian emphasis. Some of the work I've seen like in theoretical and philosophical psychology, thinking about hermeneutics, thinking about ways to be part of a larger dialogue and place yourself in that larger dialogue, so where the self matters but what also matters is our relationships and our community and our environment and our world, so that we're part of something bigger and that one thing – the self is not valued above all else.

**Dr. Dave:** Well, it's certainly going to be interesting to see where all of this goes.

**Grogan:** It is.

**Dr. Dave:** As we go down the line, and what do you see for your own work? Where do you see your own work going in the future? And I wonder if you feel like you have other books in you.

**Grogan:** Yeah, I definitely have other books in me, and that's something that I've been tossing around. I think I was really fortunate with this project, that it engaged me on so many levels. I just stayed interested throughout and never grew bored with it in the least. I mean, it's such an enormous project in a way because I was taking on really the history of a period – cultural, intellectual, political – but also these biographies of humanistic psychologists and the story of the movement and women's lib and civil rights, which is...

**Dr. Dave:** Yeah, really.

**Grogan:** ...like endless material for me to explore, and so part of me would really love another big project like that. In the back of my mind I've been tossing around a few ideas. One is a – this is not fully formulated yet, but I'm interested in the cultural and psychological construction of attachment. So thinking about what attachment has meant to us as Americans, what's drawn us to the idea of attachment and also repelled us but through specific psychological movements and cultural movements. So that's one idea in which way I think would have a lot of similarities to this book, but I also have the idea sometimes of doing a biography of a psychologist, probably because I really loved – particularly Maslow, just being in Maslow's life, just saturated in thousands of pages of journals and letters and notes and all these magazine clippings and I just really liked the feeling of being in that close to a person and the narrative aspect of it. So...

**Dr. Dave:** Hmm.

**Grogan:** ...I go back and forth between those two ideas at the moment.

**Dr. Dave:** Yeah. Boy, that attachment notion is really fascinating to step back and develop a larger picture of what that means because as I'm sure you know it's such a hot area right now and it's cross-cutting neuroscience, neurobiological research and those 2 are informing each other and I think in fascinating ways.

**Grogan:** It has really major, I think, political implications too, it's...

**Dr. Dave:** Hmm.

**Grogan:** ... – the concept of attachment parenting now which in a lot of times is very distorted but it's dividing people politically, and I think I'm just fascinated by the way that we think about attachment, good or bad, what it means that we really value birth to to free attachment and the implications. Some problematic, meaning that

maybe parents should be staying home with their kids or day care might not be the best option. And so I'm a little scared to enter that dialogue. I might feel like I will end up in a crossfire but also fascinated, so we'll see.

**Dr. Dave:** Well, what's happened with this book? How has it been received? I think I discovered this book actually – do I recall correctly that it was reviewed in the New York Times...

**Grogan:** In the New York Times, yeah.

**Dr. Dave:** Yeah.

**Grogan:** Yeah. I mean, I feel like I don't have it – I haven't gotten a statement, I don't have a true sense of how it's doing but it has been well-reviewed. So the New York Times and there are several just very good reviews of the book but also just contacts from people who were taken by it, and that to me has been the most meaningful thing, particularly people like you who lived through the movement...

**Dr. Dave:** Mm-hmm.

**Grogan:** ...and even more, I mean, even more touching to me has been Maslow's daughter who recently – I sent her the book and she – I didn't even interview her or anything for the book, but I sent it to her and was a little scared about that because I had tried to characterize this man who happened to be her father...

**Dr. Dave:** Right.

**Grogan:** ...and in a lot of depth and to create some complexity to him where he's really been read as just this big teddy bear but that's not really him and he has a lot of negative things to say about people and he has a darkness to him. And she said, "This is my father. You recreated my father," and she said, "I'm just spending all my time promoting this to everyone I know. This is so amazing that you did this," and Kerry Moustakas also you may know – Clark Moustakas who was in Michigan."

**Dr. Dave:** Yes.

**Grogan:** His daughter felt similarly and so that to me is the mark of a success, that I got it right.

**Dr. Dave:** Yeah.

**Grogan:** And that I, not coming from this, not knowing these people personally, not having lived through this time period that I really had to work to get it right. And that I feel pretty good about what I've put out there that it's balanced and it's fair.



**Dr. Dave:** Yeah, I've been sending out emails to my colleagues and closest friends, urging them to read this book because it really just fills such a need because – well, it just does, because...

**Grogan:** Thank you, yeah.

**Dr. Dave:** ...there's this big hole, that's like the Titanic has gone under the waters, and so we need something to mark that it was there and what it was...

**Grogan:** And the value, yeah, and yeah, I'm hoping it will have this second life as it catches on with academics. And it was released just at the very beginning of January and I know of several people who taught it at universities even in the spring semesters so like immediately upon it coming out. So I'm hoping that in the fall there'll be some course adaptation because it'd be really great if students were learning about this.

**Dr. Dave:** I totally agree and that's been part of the email that I've sent out.

**Grogan:** Great. Thank you.

**Dr. Dave:** Since I'm not teaching now, I'm not going to have the opportunity to use it in that way, but I'm...

**Grogan:** Right.

**Dr. Dave:** But I really endorse it for other people and among my listeners there are some professors, so this might give them some thought. Well, I hinted that I was going to wrap it up but then I got started again with you. And it's been wonderful speaking with you, Jessica...

**Grogan:** It was nice to speak with you too.

**Dr. Dave:** Dr. Jessica – yeah. Dr. Jessica Grogan, I want to thank you for being my guest today on Shrink Rap Radio.

**Grogan:** Thank you for having me on the program.